

Appendix J: Pet and Animal Handling

Many animals carry infectious diseases in their intestines, on their bodies, or in their feces that can be transferred to people. Infectious diseases in animals can be passed through the environment, contaminated food, animal feces, bites, scratches, or simply by touching the animal and not performing hand hygiene afterwards. Animals can also pass on germs to the inside surfaces of their cage, including the contents (e.g., pet foods, bedding, droppings, cage equipment). These germs can then be passed to a person who touches those surfaces or pets and does not properly perform hand hygiene afterwards.

The following guidelines will help minimize health risks:

- Pet allergies should be considered before bringing an animal into the child care facility or school.
- The animal/pet is the responsibility of the staff person bringing the pet into the child care facility or school.
- Staff should receive prior approval from the director/administrator/principal.
- Children must always be supervised by an adult when interacting with animals and pets.
- **PROPER HAND HYGIENE IS IMPORTANT.** Hand hygiene should be performed
 - before handling any animals
 - after handling any animals
 - after handling animal feed and pet treats
 - after contact with animal environment (e.g., cages, litter boxes, and aquariums)
- Animal and pet health must be assessed by the pet owner and discussed with the child care facility director or school leader prior to visiting the building.
- Deceased pets must be disposed of in a safe manner. For procedures on how to dispose of a deceased bird or small animal, refer to www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/factsheets/disposing.pdf (Manitoba Health, Public Health).
- For guidelines on the operation of petting zoos and open farms, refer to www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/protection/docs/petzoopenfarms.pdf (Manitoba Health, Environmental Health, January 2013).

Allowed Animals in Child Care Facilities and Schools

The following outlines the animals and/or pets that are permitted in child care facilities and schools.

The following animals/pets are permitted, provided risks are managed:

- pocket pets (e.g., gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs, mice, rats, degus, chinchillas)
- small caged birds (e.g., budgies, canaries, finches, lovebirds)
- psittacine birds (e.g., parrots, parakeets and cockatiels)
- non-venomous or toxin-producing insects and arthropods (e.g., stick bugs, non-biting ants, butterflies, moths, crickets, grasshoppers)
- fish
- cats and dogs
- female rabbits
- ferrets and hedgehogs
- young ruminants and baby poultry
- hermit crabs
- amphibians (e.g., frogs, toads, salamanders, and newts)
- service/companion animals

A person with a service animal has the responsibility to keep the animal under their care and control at all times.

Habitat

- Pets and animals must not be allowed in food preparation areas and eating areas.
- Outdoor dog waste areas should be separate from the play areas. Waste must be picked up and disposed of daily.
- Birds must be caged and not permitted to fly freely.
- The bottom of birdcages should be enclosed (e.g., birdcage tray) to reduce contamination from waste and to prevent bird feathers from falling out of the cage.
- Aquariums must be covered to prevent children's access to the fish.
- Farm animals must be kept separate from children's outdoor play areas.

Feeding and Cleaning

- Pet food must be stored out of children's reach and away from food used for human consumption.
- Children can assist with feeding but must be closely supervised and must perform hand hygiene before and after handling food.
- Litter boxes, cages, and aquariums must be cleaned by adults only.
- Pregnant women should not clean litter boxes, as parasites in cat feces can cause problems with pregnancy, including miscarriage.
- Birdcages must be cleaned daily.
- Do not bathe animals or clean aquariums in kitchen sinks, as this will spread germs to sinks or walls. Designate a small plastic tub or bin to bathe animals or clean habitats.
- When changing the water in an aquarium, ensure any spills are cleaned and disinfected.

Storage of Products for Animals

- Keep litter boxes and pet supplies out of children's reach and away from food used for human consumption.
- Products used for cleaning the cages, litter boxes, and aquariums must be stored in a locked location that is inaccessible to children.
- Pet food must be stored in a manner that does not attract rodents or pests.

Veterinary Care

- Animals can still carry infectious diseases even if they show no signs of illness. If an animal is showing signs of illness, do not allow contact with children and consult a veterinarian.
- Animals such as cats, dogs, rabbits, birds, pocket pets (e.g., rats, mice, rabbits, gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs), and farm animals should visit a veterinarian annually.
- Animal and pet health must be assessed by the pet owner and discussed with the child care facility director or school leader prior to visiting the building.
- It is the responsibility of the pet owner to ensure that all cats and dogs visiting the child care facility or school are vaccinated and revaccinated against rabies and other infectious diseases in accordance with the requirement of the municipality and/or recommendations of the veterinarian.

Animal Bites and Scratches

- Wash wound immediately using warm water and soap, rinse, and apply an antiseptic.
- Contact parents and inform them of the incident.
- Seek medical attention and/or recommend that parents contact the child's doctor.
- Record all details of the incident (e.g., animal description, how the animal was being handled, if it was disturbed, etc.) and follow up on the incident (including contact with parents, public health, and medical professionals).